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LINING UP YOUR FAMILY FINANCES FOR 1931.

A radio interview by Dr. Faith Williams and Mrs. E. B. Brossard, Bureau of Home Economics, delivered through Station WRC and 39 other stations associated with the National Broadcasting Company, January 15, 1931.

Mrs. Brossard: It's still so early in 1931 that I think many of you are working on your budget plans for the new year. Dr. Faith Williams in the Bureau knows a great deal about problems of family finance. I am going to ask her some questions while you listen in, because I think her answers may offer suggestions to you. Letters are coming to us now, Dr. Williams, asking for printed budgets. One is from a woman who finds her family will have much less income this year than usual. She wants to be sure that in economizing to keep within the smaller income she still protects the health and comfort of her family. Before you answer her, let me outline a very different problem another homemaker presents; her income is ample and the scale of living is a little more extravagant. She feels that she should budget carefully and so save a surplus to contribute to community relief work in her town. What are your suggestions, Dr. Williams?

DR. WILLIAMS: My first thought is of course to send both of these women F. B. 1533 that gives general methods of planning family expenditures and also F.B. 1313 which discusses food selection in detail, and to tell them about the loose leaf account book that they can buy for 50¢ from the Government Printing Office. All three of these publications will help them, but I know they really want definite budget plans. The Bureau has never published any family budgets, but we have been making a collection of budget plans which other organizations have worked out. If these homemakers will write us what incomes they have to spend, and the size of their families perhaps we can send each of them a spending plan which will be helpful.

MRS. BROSSARD: What sorts of organizations have made up these budgets you mention?

DR. WILLIAMS: Well, there are a number of different agencies that are experienced in advising families as to the wise use of their incomes. Savings banks have, for a number of years, assisted their depositors in planning family expenditures; social agencies have helped families who were in need to get the most from their resources; and certain research organizations and college departments of home economics have also prepared budgets. We have made mimeographed copies of some of the most helpful of these and can send them to people who write for them. To make these budgets especially valuable, these organizations have each included a food market list for the income level on which the budget is based.

MRS. BROSSARD: Is this material complete enough to guide the homemaker through her difficulties, if she has never budgeted her income before?

DR. WILLIAMS: She will have an easier time, of course, if she can get the help of someone who is familiar with the amounts spent by families who use their money wisely. In many cities there is a budget advisor connected with the savings bank or with some social agency who is glad to help a homemaker perfect a budget she has started.

MRS. BROSSARD: How would you advise a homemaker to begin working up a plan for this year's spending?

DR. WILLIAMS: I suppose the best thing to do is to list the fixed charges which she knows the family must meet during the coming year, such things as rent, or taxes, insurance and installment payments already contracted for, since none of these payments can be changed without a fundamental revision in the family affairs. Then she can list the amounts spent weekly or monthly in the recent past for such things as savings, food, clothing, carfare, coal, electricity and gas, health, books, and recreation items. These last expenditures can be modified somewhat by careful planning. If the total cost of the items listed comes to a sum larger than the family is likely to have to spend, then the homemaker's hard work begins.

MRS. BROSSARD: Where should she begin to pare expenses? It's pretty dangerous for people to economize on food, of course.

DR. WILLIAMS: Rather, let's say it's dangerous to spend either a large or a small amount of food money without systematic planning and considering nutritive value carefully. When I was a little girl I used to plan that my diet would consist entirely of crabmeat, coffee and cream puffs when I grew up. Fortunately, I learned to like a large variety of things to eat before I had a chance to get in the habit of consuming that rather expensive and badly balanced bill of fare to the exclusion of all other foods. Of course, no adult would confine herself or her family to three foods, but some peoples' eating habits are almost as unreasonable from the point of view of health and money as my childhood plan.

We could send the people who want to reduce the cost of their food the new circular "Buying Health with your Food Money", which is known as United States Department of Agriculture Extension Service Circular No. 139. That would help them to avoid the mistakes some people make in cutting down on food expenditures, for it suggests marketing orders which will provide adequate diets for families of different sizes. Then if the housewife finds she must economize in some other direction, she might consult one of the mimeographed budgets I mentioned before. She would choose the one which most nearly fits her income and the size of her family, of course.

MRS. BROSSARD: And so, homemakers, you have heard direct from the Bureau of Home Economics Specialist on family finances. I hope, if you want help in planning your 1931 budget, you will write to the Bureau asking for the Farmers' Bulletin on planning your family expenditures and for mimeographed budgets to meet your definite income.